

INTERNATIONAL

THE SOVIETS ON SALT

Congressional critics of the SALT II agreement have talked about amending a number of its provisions. In an exclusive article for NEWSWEEK, Dr. Georgi Arbatov, a member of the Supreme Soviet and director of Moscow's Institute of U.S. and Canadian Studies, tells why the Russians want a SALT II treaty and what the Soviet response would be to Senate-imposed changes.

I have been in the United States since early May, and Americans have asked me a lot of questions about the SALT II agreement. One of the most frequent is: why is the Soviet Union so interested in this arms limitation agreement?

The answer is very simple. The Soviet Union considers prevention of war to be the most important goal of foreign policy, a goal that cannot be achieved without the limitation and reduction of armaments. I am convinced that it is as important for the U.S. as it is for the Soviet Union. Both countries now face the same alternative.

developing and stockpiling means of destruction. It is an enormous machine, served not only by numerous experts, laboratories and factories but also by perceptions, prejudices and mutual suspicions that have become implanted in the minds of people over decades.

In contrast, great efforts, perseverance and, quite often, uncommon political courage are required to stop these mechanisms and change these perceptions. The future of our countries, even the future of human civilization, may depend on whether we shall be able to show such perseverance, wisdom and courage.

Do we, the Soviet people, like everything in the SALT II agreement? Far from it. President Leonid Brezhnev said recently that we do not consider the agreement to be perfect and would prefer many of its provisions to be replaced by others. But the agreement is the result of seven years of work and it is natural that the accord embodies mutual



Arbatov: 'Turning point'

and international security.

What will happen if the U.S. Senate does not ratify the agreement? The answer to this question is generally self-evident, and I would rather not elaborate on it, to avoid assertions that Soviet spokesmen interfere in the internal affairs and the political process in the United States and try to exert pressure on the Americans. I shall only say that the consequences of a failure to ratify the agreement will be very grave and dangerous for both

countries. Our people, apart from other things, would have to conclude that one cannot do serious business with the Americans at all.

INVULNERABILITY: I am aware of the basic arguments of those who are against the agreement. Obviously, the agreement does not and cannot resolve all the problems or remove all the reasons for concern. We are worried about the development of some U.S. weapons systems not covered by the agreement. We, like the Americans, would like to ensure the complete invulnerability of our ICBM's and have even more than 100 per cent confidence in verification. But if I fail to understand how wrecking SALT II can help solve such problems.

Take, for example, the issue of verification. The agreement provides a whole system of verification measures: special counting rules, a pledge not to interfere with each other's technical means, an obligation not to conceal telemetric data that are needed for verification, a special commission to deal with questions in dispute. Let the Americans ask themselves whether they will know more about our strategic forces without this system.

IN GOOD FAITH: One more question: will the Soviet Union make additional concessions if those are demanded by the U.S. Senate as a condition for ratification of the agreement? I would like to reiterate that we conducted negotiations in good faith with representatives of three U.S. administrations and in the course of those negotiations we agreed to such compromises which we considered possible and admissible. The Americans, in all probability, would not agree to make concessions if they were demanded by our Supreme Soviet during its discussion of the agreement. There is no reason to believe that we would behave differently under pressure from the U.S. Senate.

The SALT II agreement will not provide disarmament and absolute security. But it will be a serious step forward and I have not heard its opponents suggest anything more constructive.

My father went to war when he was 18. I went to war when I was also 18. My son is now 28 and, happily, did not have to fight a war. There will be no homecomers from a nuclear war, and there will be no winners.



Senate threat: The Soviets see 'dangerous consequences' if the treaty doesn't pass

This is either to continue a totally unrestricted arms race, which is economically ruinous and which undermines each nation's security and increases the danger of a nuclear holocaust. Or we can embark upon the road of curbing the arms race.

MAD MOMENTUM: The SALT I and SALT II agreements symbolize the historically significant fact that both countries have finally chosen to follow the second road. This road is not an easy one. One does not need to do anything, practically speaking, to continue the arms race. A gigantic, virtually mad momentum has already been built up, and all the mechanisms exist for

compromises. The result is not ideal from the point of view of either side, but it is the best that could be achieved in the present circumstances. The results are very significant both because of arms limitations—and, in the case of the Soviet Union, even some arms reductions—and because SALT II creates a good basis for continuing negotiations. Given the goodwill of the sides, those can lead to new agreements making it possible to stop the arms race and start more radical reductions. I am convinced that the SALT II agreement as a whole can become a turning point in Soviet-U.S. relations and in the efforts to safeguard peace